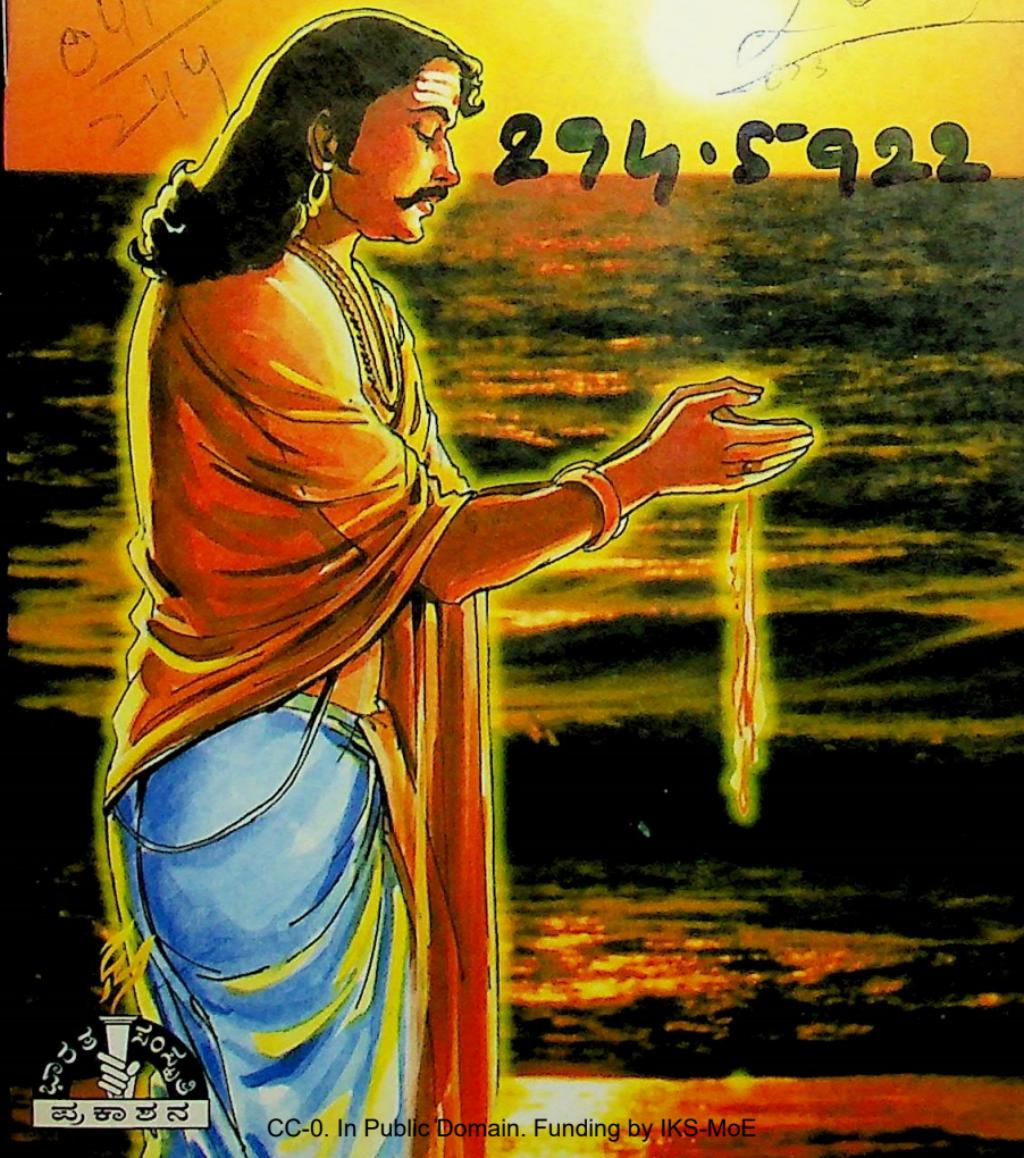


EPIC CHARACTERS
OF RAMAYANA

Vibhishana



(62)

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Vibhishana

S.r-as
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~~su/2010~~
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All the same these two epics provide us with the images of the Vedas. These are the essence of vedas, national epics of Bharatha and sources for thousands of books on our culture which followed them from the natural stream of poetical composition and enjoyment of literature. At the same time they are never drying sources of *Purusharthas* namely *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*. In the background of the struggle among human beings, they paint the struggle between the good and the evil very beautifully and announce to the world the message of victory of the good over the evil. These eloquent and learned creations, have a few universal and sovereign truths to give to the world and as a result they have occupied the pride of place among great literary works in the world.

Let the new series which is written in the same style and rhythm of the first, become popular among readers and become succour to our youth whose shelves are invaded by dirty and harmful literature. Let this series supply a charming stuff to our young readers. Let these attractive volumes provide them with values and good models, thus creating in them good taste for literature. Let them bring peace and happiness to our lives. We invoke the blessings of Lord Sriman Narayana on all of us.

With Narayanasmaranas

Sri Sri Srirangapriya Sripadasrisrih

Bangalore

Astanga yoga Vijnana Mandiram

Date : 09-07-99

श्री^१ नमः

VIBHISHANA

In *Kritayuga*,¹ Prajapathi Brahma had a very powerful son by name Pulatsya. He was a *brahmarshi*² and a great *tapasvi*.³ *Rajarshi* Trinabindu's daughter was his wife. She was serving her husband with great devotion and made him happy. When her husband was chanting the Vedas, she would listen to him intently and as a result her son became famous as Vishravasa or Vishravana. As he was the son of Pulatsya, he was also called Paulatsya. Like his father, he observed all *vratas*, respected holy customs and rituals, engaged in religious penance, and mastered the four Vedas. He was well-versed in all the *darshanas* as well.

Sage Bharadwaja was greatly pleased with Vishravas's, noble character and gave his daughter in marriage to him. In course of time the couple had a son and he was Kubera, the Lord of Wealth. Obtaining permission from Prajapathi Brahma, Kubera began to live in the

¹ *Kritha, Tretha, Dwapara* and *Kali yugas* are the four *yugas* and each *yuga* lasts for many thousands of years. Now we are in the *Kaliyuga*.

² A sage who as acquired the knowledge of the universal soul, God the ultimate

³ One who performs strict religious penance.

city of Lanka which was on the hill Trikutachala. He was assigned the regency or guardianship of the northern quarter of the world (*dikpalaka* of the northern region.)

In the *rakshasa* clan, Sukesha, had three sons by name Malyavantha, Sumali and Mali. Sumali had a number of sons and four daughters from his wife Kethumathi.

Rakshasas were constantly at war with Lord Vishnu and they lost completely and ran away to the nether world and lived there.

Once when Sumali was travelling with his daughter Kaikasi, Kubera was going in his *Puspakavimana* to see his father Vishravasa. Seeing Kubera, Sumali said to his daughter: "My dear, you are ready for marriage. You are as beautiful as goddess Lakshmi. The man who is going to marry you must deserve you. Therefore you go to Vishravas born in the family of Prajapathi and request him to marry you. You will also be blessed with sons equal to Kubera."

On her father's advice, Kaikasi went to Vishravasa. The sage was performing *agnihotra*.⁴ It was almost dusk. She did not realise that the *pradosha* (evening twilight) was a terrible and inauspicious time. She

⁴An oblation to the god of fire Agni done three times a day.

approached him and stood looking at his feet. When Vishravasa looked at the bright-faced young lady, he said: "Mangalangi (beautiful and chaste woman), who are you? Where have you come from? Why have you come here?"

"O great sage, you are all-knowing. I am Kaikasi and have come here on my father's orders," she said.

The sage meditated for sometime and said: "O chaste young lady, you have come desiring to have children from me. The time you have come here is the terrible twilight and as a result the children you get from me are going to be *rakshasas* (demons) in form and character."

On hearing the sage, she folded her hands and said reverentially: "O holy one, you are a great *brahmavadi*⁵ and I do not wish to have *rakshasas* as my children. Please bless me with good ones."

"Your youngest son will be righteous and good and he will bring great honour to your race," said the sage. As predicted by the sage, she gave birth to Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Shoorpanaka and all the three were basically wicked. The last of her sons Vibhishana was

⁵ *Brahmavadi* - a spiritual giant

consort Saraswathi, blessed him with very long periods of sleep.

Vibhishana performed *tapas* for five thousand years standing just on one leg. He did so another five thousand years, looking up at the sun with folded hands. At the end, Brahma appeared before him and said that his mind would remain fixed on *dharma*, constantly and never waver. He was pleased with him and asked him to ask for boons.

The great devotee, Vibhishana, said: "I am blessed. If you are going to grant me any boon, please grant fortitude so that my mind is always fixed in righteousness and nothing else. This is my desire. This is the greatest boon I ask you."

"My dear son, you are righteous. I will grant you whatever you ask for and that will be yours. Though you are born in a *rakshasa* family, your mind never deviates from the path of *dharma* and therefore I will grant you immortality. You will be able to wield *Brahmastra*." Brahma blessed Vibhishana.

Though Ravana and Kumbhakarna desired for immortality, they could not get it, while Vibhishana got it without asking for it.

He is one of the seven immortals among human beings.

Aswathama Balirvyaso Hanumamscha Vibhishanah I
Kripah Parashuramashcha Saptait Chirajeevinah II

In this way, the three brothers acquired great powers and began to live in Shleshat-makavana.

As a result of acquiring these extraordinary powers, Ravana got drunk with pride, drove his brother Kubera away from Lanka and got crowned himself the undisputed monarch of Lanka. According to his father's direction, Kubera built Alakapuri on Mt Kailas and began to live there. When Shoorpanakha came of age Ravana gave her in marriage to Viddujihwa, a *rakshasa*. Then he married Mandodari, daughter of Mayasura. Kumbhakarna married emperor Bali's daughter, Vajrajwala. Vibhishana married Shaileesha's daughter Sarama, who was good in every way. Sarama was born near Lake Manas. During the rains, the lake would overflow. Looking at that her mother said: '*Saro ma vardhaswa*' meaning: 'O lake! do not overflow or grow'. She said so out of love for her daughter. The lake obliged as it never

overflowed since that day. This incident gave the girl the name Sarama.

Ravana, the invincible, routed Kubera and took away his *pushpaka* plane. He destroyed Kalakeyas. On the way back, he abducted a number of *deva*, *danava*, *naga* and *yaksha* maidens. When Vibhishana came to know about his lust for other women, he told him the problems of relationship with such women. He said: "This is going to destroy your character, wealth and clan. You have destroyed the relations of these women as a result of your lust. This is one of the five deadly sins. Though you know this, your licentiousness has made you go beyond the bounds of decency. As if it were a revenge, our aunt Kumbhinacy has been abducted by the great *rakshasa*, Madhu. I was performing religious penance sitting in water. He has forced his way from the gynaeceum. I did not kill him because, isn't it the duty of us, brothers, to see that a sister, who has reached the age of marriage, is married off to a suitable young man?"

Just to kill this wicked Ravana, Mahavishnu was born as Sri Rama as a son to Dasharatha. Sri Rama married Sita, daughter of king Janaka of Mithila. When he was about

to be crowned king, he was forced to go to the forest for fourteen years. He went to the forest along with Sita and Lakshmana. While they were living peacefully in Panchavati, Ravana came to their ashrama in the guise of a monk when both Sri Rama and Lakshmana were away and abducted Sita.

Sri Rama and Lakshmana began to search for Sita and on their way they came to Kishkindha. Hanuman, son of Vayudeva served as the silken cord that bound Sri Rama and Sugreeva as friends. Sugreeva vowed to find Sita for Sri Rama, and in return, Sri Rama promised to get back his wife and kingdom.

Sri Rama killed Vali, the son of Devendra and monarch of the *vanaras* and helped Sugreeva to get his wife and kingdom. Then Sugreeva sent *vanaras* in all four directions to look for Sita. A team under the leadership of Angada, Hanuman, Jambuvanta and others left for the south. Hanuman crossed the sea and reached Lanka. He saw Sita in Ashokavana and gave her Sri Rama's ring. Sita gave her *Choodamani*⁶ and enquired about the welfare of Sri Rama and others. She sent a message to Sri Rama asking him to free her from the clutches of Ravana.

⁶ *Choodamani* is a jewel worn on the crest by women.

Later, Hanuman destroyed Ravana's beautiful pleasure gardens and killed Ravana's son Akshakumara and many other *rakshasa* heroes. Ravana's son Meghanada bound Hanuman with the help of *brahmastra* and brought him to Ravana's court.

Hanuman told the court that he was a messenger from Sri Rama. He gave a glowing account of Sri Rama's valour and his exploits and then asked Ravana to send back Sita to Sri Rama with honours. He advised Ravana to be righteous. Ravana was very angry and ordered his men to kill Hanuman.

The righteous statesman Vibhishana, brother of Ravana, decided to play his part. He began to speak soft and soothing words.

"O great king of *rakshasas*, cool down and pardon the royal messenger. Reasonable kings never kill royal messengers. It is against all principles of *dharma*. You are righteous and the best among statesmen. You are very wise. If a man of your stature does this cowardly act, your knowledge of statesmanship comes to nothing. You punish him in words, if you think you should. We should never kill a person who has come to convey his master's message. He might be our enemy, but at the

Vibhishana

same time he is a messenger. You can impose certain punishments, such as wounding their limbs, ordering lashing, shaving of their heads and others which are permitted by the *shastras* as recommended by expert statesmen.

"How can a highly reasonable man like you become angry so easily? You are unequalled in every quality of a king. Neither *Suras*⁷ nor *asuras* can defeat you in a battle. A host of strong men caused you harm and you did not kill them. In such a case, you are not going to gain anything worthwhile by killing a monkey.

"A messenger always thinks of the good of his master and speaks for others. He is not free. If you kill him here, your real enemies, Sri Rama and Lakshmana, will not come here, having no knowledge of what has happened here. If they do not come, your enemies have no chance of being destroyed. If the messenger goes back, your enemies will certainly come here. If this *vanara* is killed, who is going to encourage your enemies to give battle to you?

"Your soldiers always have your cause in their heart. They are courageous, well-born and satisfied. You have crores of such heroes at your command. Only a few of them will do

⁷devas

to take your enemies prisoners. Then you can show your real strength."

This cleverly-worded speech had its desired effect on Ravana. He gave up the idea of killing the messenger of Sugreeva and Sri Rama. He decided to make him physically disabled. 'Monkeys consider their tail as the most important limb,' he thought. He therefore ordered his soldiers to set his tail on fire. "Let him return without his tail," he shouted.

The *rakshasas* tied cloth to his tail, poured oil and set it on fire. Hanuman began to set every house he saw on fire. A major part of Lanka was reduced to ashes. Great Sita and *paramabhagavathothama*⁸ Vibhishana were not hurt in the fire.

'*Dharma rakshati rakshitah.*' Isn't it true? Hanuman returned to Kishkindha, and conveyed Sita's message to Sri Rama and gave him the *Choodamani* she had given him. Great preparations were made for the invasion of Lanka. The great army crossed the sea and encamped on the shore at a strategic place.

When this news reached Ravana's court, the *rakshasa* heroes such as Prahasta, Durmukha, Vajradamshtra, Nikumbha,

⁸ *Paramabhagavathothama* the Greatest among the devotees of God.



Vibhishana requesting Ravana to return Sita to Sri Rama

Vajraha and others showed great eagerness to fight with the enemy.

Vibhishana, who knew about Sri Rama's invincibility in war, told Ravana about it and humbly requested him to return Sita and make peace with Sri Rama. He spoke thus:

"Dear brother, if we fail to succeed in our endeavour by using *sama, dana* and *bheda*, we have to use *danda*.⁹ So says the *Neethi Sutra*.¹⁰ Our enemy Sri Rama is not a careless man. He has come here determined to win. He has a huge army. He has won over anger and therefore he has become invincible. You embark on an adventure to defeat him!

"Did anyone expect that a monkey would fly across the ocean and come here? You abducted Sri Rama's wife Sita. What harm has Sri Rama done to you? Touching a woman other than your wife is not advisable. It makes your life shorter, causes heavy loss and earns you sin in tonnes. Therefore restore Sita to Sri Rama. Sri Rama is righteous and a great hero. Do not nurture hatred towards him. Restore Sita before he destroys the plentiful and

⁹This code of ethics suggests four ways of bringing round a man - They are conciliation, liberality, discrimination and punishment in that order. 'The last one is resorted when the first three fail.

¹⁰*Neethisuthra* is the code of ethics.

beautiful Lanka. Another's wife is equal to a terrible fire. That will burn us and everything we have to ashes. I am telling you something for your good. Give up anger and hatred which are going to destroy you. Follow the path of righteousness and that will make you great. Let us live with our children and relatives for a longer time. *Pradiyatam Dasharathaya Maithili.*

"We have been experiencing incidents of ill-omen. Fire does not burn well in our *Yajnakundas*.¹¹ Vultures are seen in places where Vedas are chanted. Cows do not give milk. Horses do not feel happy with green grass. Crows caw to our discomfort. Wolves howl on the hills. Carnivorous animals roar and cause fear during day time. God is not in our favour. Under such circumstances, it is advisable to restore Maithili back to Sri Rama. I am not speaking these words with any ulterior motives. All the inhabitants of Lanka have been experiencing the signs which do not auger well for us," he concluded his long speech.

These good words spoken very skillfully did not make Ravana relent. He was angry and said: "Vibhishana, I do not sense fear from

¹¹A measured pit in which homas are performed.

any quarter. Even if Rama secures Devendra's help, he cannot stand before me."

Mahaparshva, one of his close aides, suggested to make Sita his own by using force, to which Ravana said: "As a result of a curse heaped on me by Brahma, if I force a woman to my ways, my head would break into a hundred pieces."

Once again, Vibhishana, who always stood by justice, told Ravana about how one should look at a woman other than one's own wife. "Sita is a terribly poisonous snake as far as our race is concerned. To us, she is poisonous. Thinking of another woman by itself is poisonous. Her smile is a sharp tooth. Five fingers are five hoods. You have such a poisonous snake round your neck. Restore Sita to her husband before *vanaras* who have their teeth and claws as weapons lay a siege on Lanka. None of your heroes, including Kumbhakarna, Indrajit, Mahodara, Mahaparshwa, Nikumbha, Kumbha or Atikaya can stand against Sri Rama."

When Prahashtha heard these words, he was angry and spoke very strongly.

But Vibhishana could not be cowed into submission. He continued. "Sri Rama is born

in Ikshwaku line as an incarnation of righteousness. His arrows are as powerful as *Vajrayudha*.¹² Ravana is subjected to seven vices, namely: *speaking harsh words, being cruel, wasting money, drinking, addiction to women, hunting and gambling*. Therefore he can never do a work systematically. You are all his well-wishers. We have to free him from the jaws of death. I am giving my opinion from the point of view of the well-being of Lanka. Let him restore Sita to Sri Rama. A good minister should be able to realise and estimate the strength of the two sides involved in fighting. Only then he should give the right sort of advice to the king." Thus he advised Ravana's chief minister.

When Indrajit heard the sane words of Vibhishana, who was equal to Brihaspathi in wisdom, he said, with cynical disdain: "Uncle, you seem to be frightened. What strength do human princes have? They can be killed by ordinary *rakshasas*." Vibhishana gave his nephew a few instances of Rama's great strength. But Indrajit being thoughtlessly unreasonable to listen to his uncle, once again

¹²*Vajrayudha* one of the chief weapons of the king of gods, Devendra.

advised Ravana to restore Sita and live in peace in Lanka.

Ravana was not in a mood to listen to Vibhishana. He began to speak as if he was encouraged by the Lord of Death, "We can live with your enemies, but not with your blood relations. We do not have fear from fire, but Vibhishana, I am scared of my own relations. I am born in a respectable family and I have always defeated my enemies. I do not like what you say," He continued.

"Lo, you scourge of the *rakshasa* clan, down with you. If anyone else had uttered these words, he would not have been living now. Get out of my sight," he shouted at Vibhishana. When he heard the harsh words of Ravana, Vibhishana flew up the sky with four of his aides and his mace in hand and said to Ravana: "Your majesty, even if you have given up the righteous path, you are my brother and therefore equal to my father and highly respectable. Say what you feel like saying. I find it difficult to tolerate your words. I do not agree with what is pleasant to you, for:

'Sulabhah purushah rajan satatam priyavadinah'

"O king, you can get people in thousands

who speak to your liking, but you hardly find people who have the courage to speak unpleasant words which are beneficial to the listener. People have no patience to listen to such words.

"I spoke a few words in your interest. If you do not like them, please pardon me. Protect yourself and protect Lanka. I leave Lanka respecting your order. I am sorry you do not have a single well-wisher among *rakshasas*, who can give you good advice . It is true, I have tried many times to bring you to the right path. I regret I could not help you. When one's end is near, good words do not sound pleasant," so saying Vibhishana set out for the place where Rama had encamped with his *vanara* army.

Vibhushana's form looked huge - as big as a mountain. He had four followers. They were fully armed. Vibhushana's face shone as bright as *vajrayudha*. He was fully dressed up as a prince with excellent weapons in his hands. The *vanara* warriors saw him. They collected huge boulders and tree trunks and sought permission from Sri Rama to attack the *rakshasas*.

Immediately Vibhishana addressed the

following words to the *vanara* heroes: "Great *vanara* heroes, I am Vibhishana, brother to Ravana, the king of *rakshasas*. I am very sad because of the bad deeds of my brother. He did not listen to my sane advice. Being put to shame, I have come here giving up everything including my wife and children. I have come here to surrender to Sri Rama."

Sugreeva conferred with Lakshmana. He said: "perhaps, he desires to join our army and at an opportune time he might fall on us and kill all of us. May be, he is a spy from Lanka. Ravana might have sent him here. Therefore it is better to arrest him and put him in prison." He looked at Sri Rama and fell silent.

When Rama heard Sugreeva he asked for the opinion of the *vanara* leaders. *Yuvaraj* Angada, Sharabha, Jambhuvantha, Mainda and others spoke about the disadvantages of taking Vibhishana into their fold. At last, Hanuman said: "My Lord, Vibhishana has come to us knowing full well the efficiency of Sri Rama, Ravana's ignoble behaviour, killing of Vali, Sugreeva's coronation and he probably desires to make the best use of the situation and get the throne of Lanka with your help. You know how to act in such situations. Do what you think appropriate."

Sri Rama was happy when he heard Maruthi's words of wisdom. He said: "Vibhishana has come here seeking our friendship. I do not want to disappoint him. Everyone in Lanka is his enemy. Therefore he does not distrust us. As he desires to get the kingdom of Lanka, he will not leave us at least until his desire is fulfilled. As he is a learned man, he may be of some use to us. Therefore he deserves our help.

"Whoever he may be, when one surrenders to me and seeks my protection, I assure him help and protection. It is my mission. Even if Ravana happens to come here and surrenders, I promise him protection," said, Sri Rama in a gentle tone.

"My conscience tells me that Vibhishana is pure in heart. Hanuman also observed this clearly. Raghava, let Vibhishana be one among us," said Sugreeva.

Sri Rama stepped forward and welcomed Vibhishana. Vibhishana bowed to Sri Rama and looked at the earth and touched Sri Rama's feet. Then he spoke to Sri Rama with great reverence.

"O great one worthy to be worshipped, I am brother to Ravana. He put me to shar-



Vibhishana surrendering to Sri Rama

have surrendered to you. My life and fortune are in your hands."

Sri Rama spoke to him in a friendly tone and consoled him. Then he asked him to tell him the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy force.

Vibhishana tells him about Ravana's army and its strength in the following words:

"As a result of a boon from Brahma, Ravana can never be killed by any one other than a man or a beast. His brother Kumbhakarna is strong and courageous and he is equal to Ravana in his prowess. Ravana's commander-in-chief is Prahasta, who has beaten Kubera's commander-in-chief. Ravana's son Indrajit worships Agnideva, and pleases him before he goes to fight. He arranges his army in impregnable formations and fights his enemy unseen. Ravana has ten thousand crores of rakshasa soldiers who can take any shape at will. With the help of such a powerful army, Ravana defeated all the kings of the world."

Sri Rama heard Vibhishana patiently, thought for a while and said: "Vibhishana, this time, even if Ravana takes shelter in *rasatala*,

*patala*¹³ or with Brahma, I am not going to leave him alive. I am not going to return to Ayodhya without sending him to Yama's abode."

"Sri Ramachandra, I will help you in the siege of Lanka and destroying *rakshasas*. I will fight where the battle is the thickest and this is my vow," said Vibhishana.

Sri Rama was pleased with Vibhishana's words. He got holy water from the sea and got his coronation conducted by Lakshmana.

Sugreeva and Hanuman asked Vibhishana about how to cross the sea. Vibhishana told them that the oceans were formed during the reign of Sagara, one of the ancestors of Sri Rama. "Therefore let Sri Rama pray to the Lord of the sea," he suggested.

When Sri Rama heard this, he realised that what Vibhishana said was true. Sugreeva and Lakshmana concurred with him. Sri Rama began to pray, sitting on a seat made of *darbha*, a holy grass. The lord of the sea did not seem to have heard Sri Rama's prayer. Sri Rama became angry and he vowed to dry the ocean and took up his bow for the purpose. The Lord

¹³According to scriptures there are fourteen worlds, seven below our world and six above. *Pathala* is the nether world and '*rasatala*' is the fifth below our world.

of the sea appeared before him and asked Sri Rama for forgiveness. On his advice, a bridge was built across the sea. The army went on the bridge across the sea and reached the outskirts of Lanka.

In order to get an idea of the strength of the enemy army, Ravana sent his ministers Shuka and Sarana. They assumed the shape of monkeys and entered Sri Rama's army. As they found monkeys all over, they could not count the number. The army was found in caves, on the seashore and in the forest. Some were still crossing the ocean, a lot more waiting on the other side. The army was as vast as the ocean. Vibhishana was able to recognise the two and he told Sugreeva that two of Ravana generals had come to spy on them.

The two generals were frightened and they confessed to the truth and generous Sri Rama pardoned them.

He sent a message to Ravana through them. "Ravana, now show the strength with which you abducted Sita. By tomorrow morning, your Lanka is going to be destroyed."

Shuka and Sarana went back to Ravana

and conveyed the message to Ravana. They said: "Ravanaeswara, Vibhishana has joined hands with Rama just to put us in trouble and to kill us. But great Rama has released us. O great king, Rama, Lakshmana, Sugreeva and Vibhishana look like the guardians of the world, almighty God himself. They are capable of destroying Lanka completely. Therefore make peace with them by restoring Sita to Rama."

All these incidents had no effect on Ravana '*Vinasha Kale Vipareetha Buddhi*'.¹⁴ As the saying goes, he was unrelenting. He was not for a truce.

In the meantime, Sri Rama consulted his generals like Sugreeva, Hanuman, Jambuvantha, Angada, Vibhishana and Lakshmana on the next move. How to achieve success? Vibhishana had his suggestions.

"Friends, I have four generals/ministers in Anala, Sharabha, Sampathi and Praghasa. They have just come from Lanka. They are in a better position to tell us about the war preparation in Lanka. Please ask them."

"Lanka is guarded well. The eastern gate is guarded by Prahasta, the southern gate by

¹⁴When death is nearing, man loses his reason.

Mahaparshwa, the western gate by Indrajit and the northern gate by Ravana himself. He has ten thousand elephants and chariots, twenty thousand horses and more than one crore foot soldiers. Everyone of them is strong and cruel.

"We are telling the truth to help Sri Rama. When Ravana went to fight with Kubera, sixty lakhs soldiers followed him. Everyone was equal to Ravana in strength and valour. Do not get angry with us for praising your enemy. I am trying to make you angry and more determined and not to scare you. I know you are capable of defeating the *devas*.

"Therefore make your army stand in suitable formations so that they can face Ravana's *chaturanga*¹⁵ army. You are sure to win."

Sri Rama got ready for battle. Everyone was assigned his duty. Rama and Lakshmana got ready to face Ravana; and Sugreeva, Jambuvan and Vibhishana to fight the rest. They decided that no *vanara* should take human form while fighting.

The battle began. In all the duels the *rakshasas* bit the dust. They fought till nightfall.

¹⁵ A *chaturanga* army consists of soldiers fighting on elephants and horses, sitting in chariots and foot soldiers.

Angada defeated Indrajit. Then the latter began to fight unseen. He wielded *sarpastra* which bound Sri Rama and Lakshmana. When the brothers fell unconscious, the *vanaras* were shocked and sad. Indrajit began to shout with joy.

Sugreeva and Vibhishana came to the spot. They felt sad to see Sri Rama and Lakshmana bound by arrows, but they could not see Indrajit.

Vibhishana followed the *maya* technique to spot Indrajit. He saw Indrajit standing in front of him. He was boasting about his strength to his fellow *asuras*. He began to beat Neela, Mainda, Dwivida and Jambuvan. When he saw Rama and Lakshmana lying like logs on the ground, he thought they were dead and went back to Lanka. Sugreeva was very sad and Vibhishana consoled him saying: "Sugreeva, don't shed tears. Don't be frightened. Sri Rama and Lakshmana will certainly regain consciousness."

"O king of *vanaras*, this is not the time to sit and wail. Give up sadness and see how you can raise the morale of your soldiers. Look after Sri Rama and Lakshmana till they regain consciousness. They will fill you with

confidence when they come to their own. This state is not going to harm Sri Rama in any way. His face is still shining brightly. Be confident and fill your soldiers with confidence. I am also going to do the same."

He called the *vanara* soldiers and encouraged them to be bold.

As Sugreeva was talking about medicinal herbs, a strong wind began to blow. The king of birds Garuda came flying. Just at the touch of the air released by Garuda's wings, the snakes which bound Sri Rama and Lakshmana began to run away. All the *vanaras* were happy and they roared loudly and blew conches.

When Ravana heard the sad news, he sent Dhumraksha, Vajradamshtra and Akampana to the battlefield. They were dispatched to Yama's abode by Angada. When Prahasta appeared in the battlefield, Vibhishana pointed at him and said to Sri Rama: "Raghava, this is Prahasta, the commander-in-chief of Ravana. He is a great hero and he knows how to wield a number of powerful weapons. Neela and Prahasta began to fight and Prahasta bit the dust after a long fight. Then Ravana appeared on the battlefield and he was routed by Sri Rama and ran back

to Lanka. He woke up Kumbhakarna and sent him to the battlefield.

When the *vanara* army saw the mountain-sized Kumbhakarna, they got scared and began to run helter-skelter. On seeing this, Sri Rama asked Vibhishana who that mountain-man was. He said he had not seen such a being.

"Raghava, this *rakshasa* is the son of Vishravasa. He is called Kumbhakarna. He is a great hero. He has defeated Indra and Yama. He has defeated *devas* on hundreds of occasions. As soon as he was born, unable to control his hunger, he swallowed thousands of animals. He also swallowed human beings in large numbers.

"When *devas* approached Brahma for help, he cursed him; according to which he would be sleeping most of the time. When Ravana begged Brahma, the curse was modified and he would be sleeping for six months and reawake for six months. On the day he wakes up he would swallow one thousand among the citizens of Lanka.

"Now that Ravana was frightened of your valour, he woke up Kumbhakarna at the wrong time. He is running about to swallow

vanaras. Therefore they are speeding away from the battlefield." Kumbhakarna killed thousands of *vanaras* and made bold by the success to face Sri Rama. A terrible battle followed. In the end Rama killed him. Then the great *vanara* heroes killed Naranthaka, Devanthaka, Thrishirasa, Mahaparshwa and Mohodara, all famous *rakshasa* heroes. Ravana was greatly worried at the loss.

On orders from Ravana, Indrajit made Sri Rama and Lakshmana unconscious with the help of *brahmastra*. Once again, Hanuman brought medicinal herbs from Mahendra ranges and the brothers were saved. Then many *rakshasa* heroes fell to the arrows of Sri Rama and others. Indrajit created a *maya*¹⁶ Sita by then. He brought it to the battlefield and killed it as the *vanaras* were looking at it. When Sri Rama heard the news that Sita was killed, he fell on the ground unconscious. Lakshmana helped him regain consciousness and consoled him.

Vibhishana, a great well-wisher of Sri Rama, said: "Your Majesty, the wicked Ravana would never allow anyone to kill Sita. I suggested to him to give up the thought of Sita, He did not listen to me.

¹⁶ Art of using mantras to achieve what one desires to have

"Now he has planned to perform a special *yaga* by name Nikumbhila and he has flummoxed the *vanaras* to achieve it. In fact, he has killed only the *maya* Sita. Now he is going to complete the *yaga*. When he completes it, he will acquire great strength and not even Indra and his clan can beat him. He is thinking that when the *vanaras* are fighting his men here on the battlefield, he could complete the *yaga* in a secret place. Let us go to Nikumbha mandir before the *homa* concludes. Stop worrying. Send Lakshmana with a strong army. He will stop the *yaga* half way and then he can kill Indrajit easily. Lakshmana's sharp arrows, then would suck the young *rakshasa*'s blood. Just as Devendra sent the *vajrayudha* to destroy *asuras*, you send Lakshmana to put an end to Indrajit. If the *yaga* is over, no one will be able to see him and he will fight us unseen. Then, there is no question of fighting." Thus he spoke appropriate words to encourage Sri Rama to action.

Sri Rama ordered Lakshmana to go to Nikumbhila mandira and kill Indrajit. Lakshmana set out along with Hanuman, Vibhishana and four other great heroes and a huge army.

Vibhishana took Lakshmana to the place

where Indrajit was performing the *yaga*. There was a banyan tree which looked frightening. Pointing at it, Vibhishana said: "Lakshmana, Indrajit is going to feed *bhootas* and then gets ready for battle. As a result, he will become unseen. Then he can kill anyone he likes. He will bind anyone he likes, with arrows. Therefore, before he reaches the spot, you challenge him to a fight."

Accordingly, Lakshmana challenged Indrajit to a fight. When the latter saw Vibhishana by the side of Lakshmana, he spoke contemptuously: "Uncle, you were born and brought up in Lanka. You are brother, to my father. How can you betray your own son? Wicked man, you do not love your own people. You are not friendly with your close relatives. You do not love your brother. You do not have any notion of *dharma* or reason. You have incurred the wrath of good people by deserting your own kith and kin. Even when your own people are bad and the enemy is good, it is your own person who is going to be by your side in times of need. The man who joins hands with the enemy causes not only his people's, but also his own downfall. Bringing Lakshmana here is an act of perfidy. Such an

act can be done only by one who deserts his own men."

When Vibhishana heard Ravana's son's words, he said to him: "You *rakshasa*, you speak as if you do not know my character. Stop talking harshly at least to respect elders. Though I am born of a *rakshasa*, my way of thinking and acts are not those of *rakshasas*. I have taken refuge under good people.

"I cannot indulge in acts of wickedness, but just respect my elder brother. I have been serving him obediently. I spoke words having his welfare in mind. But he sent me out of the land. The man whose character is far removed from *dharma*, and the person whose desires are full of sin should be discarded. Our elders have advised us to give up those who indulge in perpetrating violence on others, those who covet the wealth of others and those who desire for others' wives. These acts lead us to total destruction.

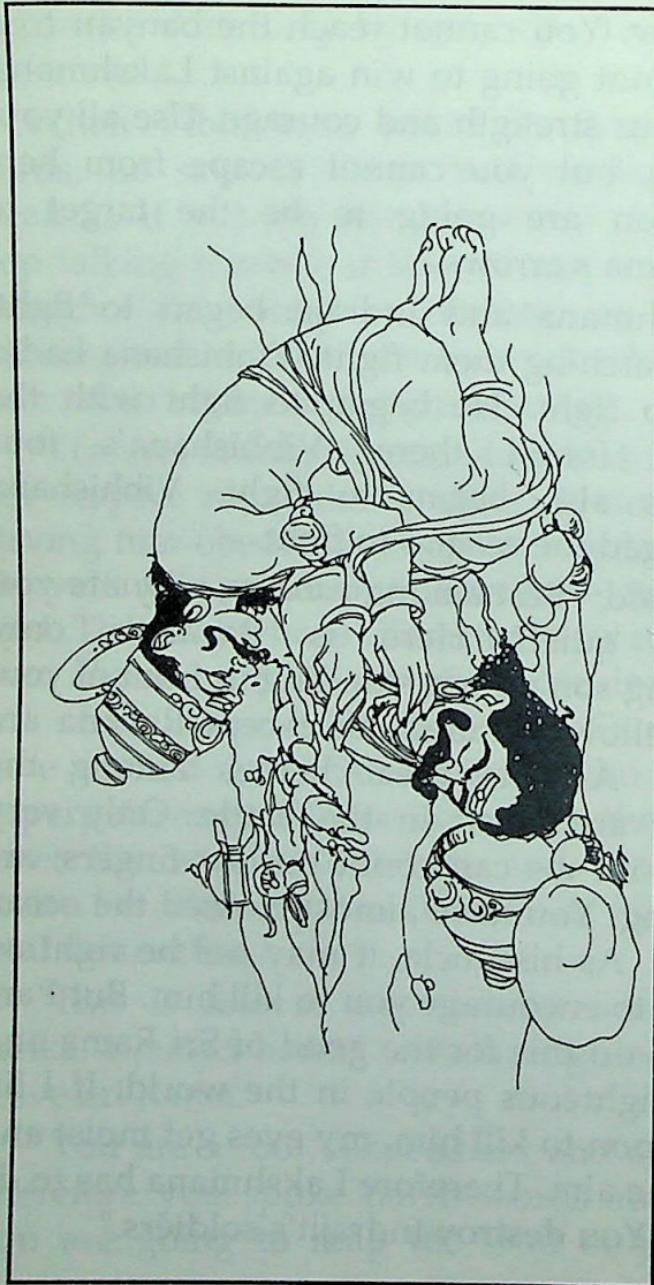
"This is one of the reasons why I left Lanka. I joined hands with the righteous and brave Sri Rama.

"You are a fool, disobedient and arrogant. Therefore you spoke harsh words about me. You are going to reap the fruit of your act

right now. You cannot reach the banyan tree. You are not going to win against Lakshmana. Show your strength and courage. Use all your weapons, but you cannot escape from here alive. You are going to be the target to Lakshmana's arrows."

Lakshmana and Indrajit began to fight. While watching them fight, Vibhishana had a desire to fight. He began to fight with the *rakshasas* found there. Vibhishana's four ministers also began to fight. Vibhishana encouraged the *vanaras* to fight.

He said: "Best among *vanaras*, why are you keeping quiet? Here is Ravana's only remaining son who is standing in front of you. If this fellow is killed, all except Ravana are finished. All the great heroes among the *rakshasas* are killed in the battle. Only very few, whom we can count on our fingers, are remaining. You have almost crossed the ocean of battle. As his uncle, it may not be right on my part to encourage you to kill him. But I am going to do this for the good of Sri Rama and all the righteous people in the world. If I lift my weapon to kill him, my eyes get moist and I miss the aim. Therefore Lakshmana has to do this job. You destroy Indrajit's soldiers."



When Vibhishana saw Ravana lying dead on the battlefield,
he began to weep.

As a result, all the *vanara* heroes began to fight with renewed vigour. Lakshmana prayed to Rama and shot the *Indrastra* on Indrajit and killed him. Victorious Lakshmana came to Sri Rama along with Maruthi and Vibhishana, fell at Sri Rama's feet and told him that the work assigned to him was accomplished. Vibhishana announced that it was Lakshmana who severed the head of Indrajit. Sri Rama was very happy and embraced his brother in great delight and congratulated him.

Then fight between Rama and Ravana began. Sri Rama was fighting standing on the ground, while Ravana was fighting from his chariot. Seeing this, Devendra sent his divine chariot and his charioteer Matali to help Sri Rama. Sage Agastya initiated Sri Rama to *Adityahridaya* mantra, so that he could become victorious. Sri Rama chanted it with devotion and began to fight. He killed Ravana by using *brahmastra*, an accomplishment which dulled the heroics of even *devas*.

When Vibhishana saw his brother Ravana lying dead on the battlefield, he began to weep. "Rakshaseswara, you used to sleep on a soft silken bed, but now you are lying dead on the battlefield. Your crown, which is equal to the sun in brightness, is rolling on the ground.

I had told you what was good for you. But you did not like it. No one on your side heeded my words. You have reaped the fruits of your arrogance. The greatest among heroes, I am sorry that you are dead. Who is going to give patronage to heroes? A great tree by name Ravana was caught in a terrible storm by name Rama, and was uprooted. A wild elephant by name Ravana, who had an attack of '*must*'¹⁷ was torn to pieces by Sri Rama, the lion." He thus wailed long and loud.

Sri Rama consoled him saying: "Vibhishana, your brother Ravana fought bravely and died like a hero. Therefore you need not wail over his death. He has attained a place in heaven, set apart for great heroes. Get up and think of performing his last rites.

Vibhishana spoke the following words to find out what Sri Rama would say. He said: "Raghava, my brother is a great hero and there is no doubt about it, but he has abducted a number of women, killed great sages. How can I perform the last rites of a sinner like him? If I do not do it, people will call me cruel, ungrateful and selfish. What shall I do?"

Sri Rama advised Vibhishana to perform those rites which would help Ravana reach

¹⁷ 'Must' is a Urdu word meaning temporary madhness.

heaven. "Ravana was a brave man, a great giver of alms, well-versed in the Vedas and *Sastras* and a *agnihotri*.¹⁸ Therefore his last rites have got to be done according to *shastraic* rites and they should be done with devotion. "*Marananthani Vairani*" - yes, enmity goes as far as death. Then it disappears. Therefore perform all the rites as per *shastraic* prescriptions. Now Ravana is as close a friend to you as he is to me," said Sri Rama.

All the ladies in the gynaeceum were wailing. Sri Rama asked Vibhishana to console them and perform the last rites.

Ravan's body was cremated and then Vibhishana asked every one to return to the palace. He went to Sri Rama and stood before him in reverence and humility.

When everything was over, Sri Rama asked Lakshmana to crown Vibhishana, the king of Lanka. Accordingly, Lakshmana got holy waters from the sea and many rivers. Vibhishana was made to sit on a throne made of gold and precious stones. He was given a coronation bath to the chanting of the holy scriptures. He made the *vanara* heroes do the same. Thus the coronation which was

¹⁸ *Agnihotri* is one who makes oblation to *Agni* the god of fire and maintains that sacrificial fire in his house continuously.

performed on the seashore was formalised. When people saw Vibhishana sit on the throne they were happy. The *rakshasas* who loved and respected him, gave him costly presents. Vibhishana received and offered gifts to Sri Rama and Lakshmana. Just to please Vibhishana, Sri Rama accepted the gifts.

Sita was supremely happy to know about the death of Ravana from Hanuman. She sent the message '*Bhartaram drushtum Icchami*:- she would like to see her husband.

As ordered by Sri Rama, Vibhishana went to Ashokavana in great reverence. He said: "O great princess of Vidheha, may good things descend on you. Have a bath and dress yourself up in your best and we will take you to your husband. It is Sri Rama's order." Sita did as she was told. As the chariot was drawing near, people gathered there thronged to have a glimpse of her. Out of great respect for Sita, Vibhishana ordered them to move away and make way for Sita's chariot. Sri Ramachandra was angry and said to Vibhishana: "All these people are my people. Therefore there is no harm in their having a look at her. Do not push anyone away."

Vibhishana followed Sri Rama's orders and conducted Sita to Sri Rama's presence.

Sri Rama knew full well that Sita was pure in thought, word and deed. Still he wanted to show the world that she was pure. He put her to a severe test. It was a test by fire. Agni Deva proved the purity of her character. Agnideva, in fact, became purer by her touch. He brought her back and with great humility, offered her to Sri Rama.

The next morning, Vibhishana came to Sri Rama and said: "The greatest among the princes of Raghu family, here are ladies who are experts in the art of giving you a bath and dressing you up. Bless me by receiving this favour." Sri Rama, who was eager to see Bharatha, refused the royal treatment offered to him.

"Raghava, I have a great plane by name *puspaka*. It was Kubera's property. Once Ravana defeated him and took it away from him. Now it is with me. It flies at will. It is divine and sacred. I have been guarding it just for your sake. It is ready for your journey to Ayodhya. You can board it and travel without worry. I would like to honour you. Please

accept the honour and then leave for Ayodhya," Vibhishana prayed.

"Vibhishana, do not be angry with me. My heart is craving to see Bharatha. I have completed my task. Therefore send us back as early as possible. Get the plane here immediately," said Sri Rama.

In a trice, the plane was brought and Vibhishana told Sri Rama that the plane which could travel at the speed of mind was ready for him. He sought from Sri Rama further orders.

"Vibhishana, the *vanara* army has fought valiantly for our victory. Please honour it. It will be equal to honouring me," said Sri Rama.

Then Vibhishana gave valuable presents to all the *vanara* heroes. When that was over, Sri Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, boarded the plane. Then all the *vanaras* and Vibhishana, folded hands and said: "We would like to go to Ayodhya with you, take part in your coronation, and walk freely in the beautiful gardens of Ayodhya." As soon as Sri Rama agreed to it, all of them got on to the plane. It took off, flew very fast and reached Ayodhya.

Sri Rama met Bharatha. Under the

direction of sage Vasishta, Sri Rama's coronation was performed in a grand manner.

All the *vanaras* and *rakshasas* were given suitable presents. Sri Rama gave Vibhishana an idol of Lord Ranganatha, which was the property of Ikshwaku family, as a royal gift. Vibhishana received the gift in great reverence, returned to Lanka and ruled over the land righteously.

When Sri Rama realised that the objective of his incarnation was fulfilled, he made up his mind to return to his divine abode. At that time he called Vibhishana to Ayodhya. Vibhishana, the great devotee of Sri Rama, desired to follow him to *Vaikunta*, but Sri Rama said: "I am extremely grateful to you, but you should not follow me. You should live here, worshiping me for ever. You have to follow my order." Vibhishana sincerely followed Sri Rama's order.

Those who have not understood Vibhishana criticize him as a traitor and a betrayer of his own people. This is silliness and lack of understanding. Vibhishana advised Ravana at every stage, but the latter did not heed his advice. On the other hand, he put Vibhishana to shame and banished him

from his kingdom. Vibhishana, left with no choice, and in order to protect righteousness and save Lanka from total annihilation, had to join Sri Rama who was incarnation of *dharma* and all that was good in the world. These points are clear to us from his words and deeds.

Prahlada Narada Parashara Pundarika 1

Vyasam Shareesha Shuka Shaunaka Bhishma dalbhyan ॥

Rukmangadarjuna Vasishtha Vibhishanadeen 1

Dhanyaniman parama bhagavathan smarami ॥

Good people all over the world recognize Vibhishana as an infinitely good person and class him along with all-time great devotees like Prahlada, Narada, Vyasa and others.

'Sri Ramachandrarpanamastu'

